

Financing – Communicate Impacts

Description

After you [launch](#) your financing activities, work to [improve your processes](#), and start to see positive results, it's time to capture these successes and share them with external stakeholders.

Sharing successes showcases the impacts of the work of your staff, partners, and other key stakeholders, and can contribute to the development of a self-sustaining marketplace for energy efficiency lending by proving that home energy lending is beneficial for all involved (i.e., homeowners, lenders, and contractors).

Financing activity results from your program's [impact evaluation](#) are good information to communicate, but you should also plan to develop and share examples, stories, lessons learned, best practices, etc., that highlight financing successes to demonstrate the viability and value of energy efficiency lending.

Your program's communication strategy will be developed at the [programmatic level](#). As part of this communication strategy, your program will identify:

- Roles and responsibilities for program staff and partners
- External audiences for communicating program impacts
- Channels and products for communication.

This handbook focuses on the steps for you to communicate the impacts of your financing activities as part of your program's communication strategy. They are:

- Collect examples, stories, lessons learned, best practices, and data trends that highlight financing successes.
- Communicate program impacts with your lending partners.

Financing

Stages:

[Overview](#)

1. [Assess the Market](#)
2. [Set Goals & Objectives](#)
3. [Identify Partners](#)
4. [Make Design Decisions](#)
5. [Develop Implementation Plans](#)
6. [Develop Evaluation Plans](#)
7. [Develop Resources](#)
8. [Deliver Program](#)
9. [Assess & Improve Processes](#)
10. **Communicate Impacts**

Find related information across other program components:

- **Market Position & Business Model – Communicate Impacts**
Publicize benefits and lessons learned resulting from your organization's success in the market.
- **Program Design & Customer Experience – Communicate Impacts**
Develop a strategy for communicating program impacts and benefits to key audiences to create and sustain support and engagement.
- **Evaluation & Data Collection – Communicate Impacts**
Communicate pertinent results of evaluations to program staff, partners, and stakeholders.
- **Marketing & Outreach – Communicate Impacts**
Communicate marketing and outreach results internally and to partners.
- **Contractor Engagement & Workforce Development – Communicate Impacts**
Communicate program results to contractor partners and workforce development stakeholders.

Step-by-Step

As part of your [program's strategy](#) for communicating impacts, you will want to identify financing successes to share with external stakeholders, as well as program-wide successes to share with your lending partners.

The following two steps can help you communicate the impacts of your financing activities.

Collect examples, stories, lessons learned, best practices, and data trends that highlight financing successes

Examples, Stories, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

As you [deliver your program](#) and maintain communication with homeowners and your lending and contractor partners, plan to identify examples, stories, lessons learned, and best practices that highlight the successes of your program's financing activities. These successes can be communicated to audiences such as program funders, homeowners, potential lending and contractor partners, secondary investors, and the media to demonstrate the positive impact your program is making, the viability and profitability of home energy lending, and the value of home energy lending as a tool to drive uptake of home energy upgrades.

These successes might include:

- Homeowners who were able to convert their interest in home energy upgrades into actual completion because of the affordable financing offered.
- Homeowners who were initially only interested in air sealing their home, but due to affordable financing also decided to upgrade their refrigerator, washer/dryer, and HVAC system, resulting in deeper energy savings.
- Contractors who are able to process paperwork quickly so that approvals happen the same day.
- Lenders who experienced low initial approval rates for home energy loans using traditional underwriting criteria, but then saw increases in approval rates (with low default rates) when switching to alternative underwriting criteria (e.g., utility bill payment history).
- How your program saw increases in loan uptake by ensuring that contractors could explain financing options to homeowners with simple messages focused on long-term value, low monthly payments, low interest rates, enhanced home comfort, and energy savings.

You can collect successes through surveys of homeowners and regular meetings with your lending and contractor partners, discussed in the [Financing – Assess & Improve Processes](#) handbook. Your program should encourage open, informal, and ongoing input from your lender and contractor partners to help collect successes.

All examples, stories, lessons learned, and best practices should be passed on to the person in your program responsible for implementing your communication strategy.

Data Trends

Use positive trends in your program's financing metrics, tracked through implementation of your [financing evaluation plan](#) and [overall evaluation plan](#) to highlight the success of your financing activities to external stakeholders. Downward trends and areas of improvement are also important to look out for and should be resolved while working with your lending and contractor partners to [assess and improve processes](#).

Data to watch for may include:

- Increases in loan applications and approvals
- Increases in average loan amount
- Decreases in time between loan application and approval
- Decreases in loan payment defaults.

Work with your lending partners and evaluation team to collect these positive data trends, and pass them on to your program's communication team to incorporate into outreach material.

Efficiency Maine Highlights Financing Successes

[Efficiency Maine](#) administers a number of energy-saving programs to promote the efficient and cost-effective use of energy by Maine homeowners. Through Efficiency Maine, the [Home Energy Savings Program](#) offers a variety of energy loans to help homeowners pay for energy upgrades, including Efficiency Maine Energy Loans, Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans, and FHA PowerSaver loans.

Efficiency Maine [publishes](#) annual reports, and showcases homeowner [case studies](#) on their website that highlight successes made possible through energy efficiency financing.

The images below are screen shots showing how Efficiency Maine has communicated some of its successes:

- The [2012 Year in Review](#) highlights the story of how one couple used a home energy loan from Efficiency Maine to make their home more comfortable and save an expected 40% on their energy costs.

2012 Year in Review



Source: [2012 Year in Review](#), Efficiency Maine, 2012

- The [case study](#) of a homeowner illustrates how she was able to finance home energy upgrades that will save her 30% a year in energy bills. More [case studies](#) are also available on Efficiency Maine's website.

Efficiency Maine Case Study



Source: [Putting an end to ice dams case study](#), Efficiency Maine, 2013

Efficiency Maine's [2013 Annual Report](#) also provides metrics of financing successes achieved in fiscal year 2013, which include:

- 203 loans issued, totaling \$2.5 million, through Efficiency Maine's PACE and PowerSaver Loan Program (129 PACE loans, 25 secured PowerSaver loans, and 49 unsecured PowerSaver loans).
- Average loan amounts of \$12,730 for PACE loans, \$21,349 for secured PowerSaver loans, \$6,528 for unsecured PowerSaver loans.
- Verified first-year, annual gross savings for the PACE and PowerSaver Loan Program for fiscal year 2013: 10,445 million British thermal units (MMBtu), or an average of 54.4 MMBtu per project.

Communicate program impacts with your lending partners

Through your ongoing interactions with lending partners, plan to share positive financing data trends with them as well as homeowner success stories related to financing and program-wide impacts.

Communicating your successes will demonstrate the positive impact your program is making in your community and how your lending partners are contributing to that impact. Demonstrating the viability and profitability of home energy lending will also strengthen confidence in it among your current lending partners, potential lending partners, and secondary investors, helping to create a sustainable market for home energy lending.

Program-wide impacts to consider communicating to your lending partners include:

- Total upgrades completed
- Number of jobs created, number of workers receiving a paycheck, or increased contractor revenue
- Energy saved per home upgrade and total energy saved
- Energy cost savings per homeowner and total cost savings
- Conversion rates between home energy assessments and upgrades completed
- Types of upgrades homeowners are completing through your program
- Customer satisfaction with your program's offerings and their experience working with your program
- Successful marketing and outreach initiatives undertaken by your program
- Types of financing that homeowners are using to complete energy upgrades, the average loan amount, and the loan default rate
- Market transformation effects on the home performance industry in your community. For example:

- - Greater awareness of opportunities and benefits of home energy upgrades among homeowners, contractors, lenders, and other market actors
 - Larger, more comprehensive upgrade projects being undertaken
 - Greater quantity and quality of upgrade projects completed.

Community Power Works Showcases Program Impacts

[Community Power Works](#) in Seattle, Washington, partners with two lenders to provide low-interest loans: local nonprofit community lender Craft3 and Puget Sound Cooperative Credit Union.

Community Power Works' website prominently highlights [homeowner stories](#) that detail how affordable financing offered by the program's lending partners help to make upgrades possible. For example, one such [story](#) explains how one customer upgraded her old, inefficient furnace with a new, efficient model, saving her family \$200 a month on their energy bill. The high upfront cost of the furnace replacement threatened to put the upgrade out of Susie's reach, but through a low-interest, Craft3 loan she was able to complete the upgrade.

Tips for Success

In recent years, hundreds of communities have been working to promote home energy upgrades through programs such as the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, utility-sponsored programs, and others. The following tips present the top lessons these programs want to share related to this handbook. This list is not exhaustive.

Good news is addictive – spread news about program accomplishments widely and often

Successful programs use many channels to communicate accomplishments and results to stakeholders. These include word of mouth and products such as press releases, announcements on websites, case studies, and presentations. Many programs use earned media—especially local media when possible—by giving people something to talk about, such as endorsements from local personalities.

- New Orleans' [NOLA WISE](#) program (Worthwhile Investments Save Energy) organized showcases hosted by homeowners. NOLA WISE promoted these showcases through neighborhood canvassing, electronic newsletters, social media, and collaboration with nearby neighborhood associations. The events often generated earned media coverage. NOLA WISE experienced an uptick in home energy assessment requests in neighborhoods where these events were held following the showcases.
- At the [Energize Bedford](#) launch event, Martha Stewart—one of Bedford's best-known citizens—was a prominent attendee and supporter. Reaching well beyond the immediate community, Martha Stewart [wrote about her experience](#) on her blog, further illuminating the important work of Energize Bedford. Locally well-known people can be effective program champions as well, such as a local weather person.
- The [Solar and Energy Loan Fund](#) in St. Lucie County, Florida actively attracted media coverage by continuously refreshing its message, maintaining a sense of new activity and innovation, and stressing its contribution to the community. The program emphasized "firsts" in its messaging—such as its first loan, its first experience with crowd funding, and launching the county's first PACE financing program. It emphasized key funding or participation milestones (e.g., \$2 million in loans issued). The program also highlighted the success of its partners and the satisfaction of clients, in addition to its own accomplishments. These activities kept the program continuously in the news.

Examples

The following resources are examples from individual residential energy efficiency programs, which include case studies, program presentations and reports, and program materials. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

Case Studies

[Spotlight on Austin, Texas: Best Offer Ever Produces Upgrades in Record Time](#) (555 KB)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

With its Best Offer Ever promotion, Austin Energy completed comprehensive energy upgrades in a record 564 homes in only six months--more than 10 times the utility's typical participation rate. To quickly develop momentum for BetterBuildings-Austin Energy's Clean Energy Accelerator program with homeowners, Austin Energy leveraged its existing Home Performance with ENERGY STAR infrastructure, experience, and contractor base but added a comprehensive rebate/financing offer for a finite launch period. Demand soared, and due to thoughtful planning, Austin Energy and its contractors were able to keep up with requests for energy assessments, inspections, improvements, and loan origination, while learning valuable lessons along the way.

[Using Credit Enhancements to Leverage Existing CDFI Capacity: Indianapolis EcoHouse Project Loan Program](#)

Author: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Publication Date: 2012

Highlights the EcoHouse Project Loan Program, which provides fixed interest rate loans as a tool for enabling energy improvements among households that are otherwise unlikely to be able to access affordable financing at market rates.

[Alternative Underwriting Criteria: Using Utility Bill Payment History as a Proxy for Credit: Case Study on Clean Energy Works Oregon \(now Enhabit\)](#) (340 KB)

Author: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Publication Date: 2012

Highlights a Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) program that provides outreach, education, incentives, and low interest, on-bill financing. Using alternative underwriting practices, Clean Energy Works Oregon (now Enhabit) has achieved a rejection rate of just 10% while also maintaining a low loan default rate.

[Low-Interest Rates Entice Philadelphians to Reach for the Stars](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

Outlines Philadelphia's EnergyWorks program's use of low-interest loans to incentivize homeowners by tying the interest rate to the number of energy efficiency measures incorporated into the home.

[NYSERDA's Green Jobs-Green New York Program: Extending Energy Efficiency Financing to Underserved Households](#) (373 KB)

Author: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Publication Date: 2011

Discusses innovative financing options designed to expand the accessibility of energy efficiency financing to households that typically do not qualify for traditional loans.

[Spotlight on Austin, Texas: Let Your Contractor Be Your Guide for Big Rewards](#) (445 KB)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2011

This case study discusses strategies that Austin Energy, a municipally owned utility, used to collaborate closely with building contractors to launch a new Best Offer Ever promotion quickly and effectively.

[Alabama's Approach to Building a Sustainable Home Energy Efficiency Industry](#)

Author: National Association of State Energy Officials; Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

Publication Date: 2014

This case study presents information about the AlabamaWISE program. It includes background information, approaches the program took to enhance home energy efficiency, and results achieved by the program.

Program Presentations & Reports

[Energy Savers: Your One Stop Shop for Energy Efficiency Upgrades](#) (2 MB)

Author: Peter Ludwig, CNT Energy

Publication Date: 2012

Presentation that provides an overview of the Energy Savers Program (Illinois), including services, benefits, and success stories.

[Solar and Energy Loan Fund \(SELF\) 2015 Annual Report](#)

Author: Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF)

Publication Date: 2015

This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of the Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF).

Program Materials

[Community Power Works Infographic](#)

Author: Community Power Works

Publication Date: 2014

This infographic illustrates program accomplishments between 2011 and 2014.

[NYSERDA Green Jobs-Green New York \(GJGNY\) Advisory Council Reports](#)

Author: NYSERDA Green Jobs-Green New York

Publication Date: 2015

This page contains annual and monthly update reports of the Green Jobs-Green New York program.

Toolbox

The following resources are available to help design, implement, and evaluate possible activities related to this handbook. These resources include templates and forms, as well as tools and calculators. The U.S. Department of Energy does not endorse these materials.

Templates & Forms

None available at this time.

Tools & Calculators

[Small Town Energy Program \(STEP\) Toolkit](#)

Author: Small Town Energy Program

Publication Date: 2013

The Small Town Energy Program (STEP) toolkit gives a complete overview of STEP from planning to implementation. It also includes access to a wide variety of materials developed by the program, including: local asset materials, partner materials, personnel materials, program administrative materials, outreach materials, and surveys. STEP has posted these toolkit documents with the hope that it will assist other small towns and communities in building and running more energy efficiency programs.

Topical Resources

The following resources provide additional topical information related to this handbook, which include presentations, publications, and webcasts. Visit [Examples](#) for materials from and about individual programs.

Topical Presentations

None available at this time.

Publications

[DOE State and Local Solution Center: Financing for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy](#)

Author: U.S. Department of Energy

Publication Date: 2015

Provides tactical information on financing program key elements and descriptions of financing program types by market sector for state and local governments working to set up financing programs.

[Energy Efficiency Financing Program Implementation Primer](#)

Author: State and Local Energy Efficiency Action Network

Publication Date: 2014

This report provides an overview of considerations for designing and implementing successful energy efficiency financing programs for existing buildings in the residential and commercial sectors. Information on key issues related to energy efficiency financing programs, guidance to existing resources that provide more in-depth financing program design and implementation information, and strategies for delivering broad customer access to attractive financing products that enhance customer capacity and willingness to invest in energy efficiency to address "first cost" barriers are included.

[Energy Efficiency Program Impact Evaluation Guide](#) (3 MB)

Author: State and Local Energy Efficiency Action Network

Publication Date: 2012

This guide provides an introduction to the key issues, practices, and steps for calculating energy savings, avoided emissions, and other non-energy impacts associated with energy efficiency programs.

[What Have We Learned from Energy Efficiency Financing Programs?](#) (718 KB)

Author: American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy

Publication Date: 2011

This report presents results, recommendations, and case studies of energy efficiency financing programs.

Webcasts

None available at this time.

